

The Christian Family

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IN the moral and intellectual restlessness of the present day perhaps no institution is so frequently assailed both in theory and in practice as is that of Christian marriage. If we may judge from their public utterances, there are an alarming number of men and women in this country and abroad who are deliberately trying to bring about the abolition of Christian marriage and the destruction of the family. The protagonists of this group assert that Christian marriage met the needs of a simpler age with passable success, but for our times it is utterly inadequate. Like any new revolt against traditional standards, this sort of doctrine has a certain appeal, not because of the merit of its thought but because of its daring; it has an added charm for those who see in it the means of flinging a grace over sin and respectability over license. It may not be amiss, therefore, to inquire into the origin and justification of Christian marriage and its corollary, the family.

ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE

The social structure in which mankind lives did not originate by chance, nor yet by the sudden decision of a few men. Its constancy, stability and universality give proof that, just as the limbs and foliage of a tree have their beginnings in its roots, so the conformation of society has its origin in the very nature of man. It is

founded on the natural law which as St. Paul tells us, is written on men's hearts. Now the basic unit of society is the family; the family is human society in miniature; and the family, not less than society itself, is founded on the natural law. God, when He created the human race, willed its propagation and education as an essential part of His scheme of things—a propagation and education that were to be in accord with the dignity of rational human nature. By the same token the Creator willed and ordained whatever was necessary as a means to insure this end. But for the fitting propagation and education of the human race just any sort of union of men and women does not suffice; a stable and permanent union is required—in other words, a true conjugal society, *i. e.*, the family. What could be less in accord with the dignity of rational human nature than mere temporary union of man and woman? What could be more harmful to the physical, moral and intellectual education of the child? For this education is not the work of one parent—or even of both parents—for just a few months or years. The proper development of the child calls for daily vigilance on the part of father and mother over a long period of years; indeed, not infrequently, only death itself ends parental responsibility in this regard.

It must be obvious to competent observers that most of the social disorders of the present day are caused by the passions and ambitions of individual men. Society cannot guarantee human welfare—the very object of its existence—unless men have been trained in the social virtues. Now ordinarily, these social virtues may be learned there or they are simply not acquired at all. It is in the family that the individual learns the great and fundamental duty of obedience, in the family that he learns the other great social duty of cooperation; it is in the family that men and women learn the meaning of responsibility. Family life is the great educator; it inculcates mutual love, mutual forbearance, mutual patience, mutual sacrifice, the fulfilment of mutual duties—such is the keynote of real family life. No society can hope to be strong if the family is weak; and the stability of the family life depends upon the stability of the marriage tie. Destroy this stability, and you destroy the means intended by the Author of nature for the preservation and development of the human race.

MARRIAGE A SACRAMENT

Hence we see the tremendous significance of Christ's having raised the marriage contract to the dignity of a sacrament. Questioned by the Pharisees regarding marriage (Matthew xix. 6), He reminded them of the words of Genesis: "For this cause a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh." "Therefore," the Master added, "now they are not two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder." And elsewhere Our Lord declares (Luke xxi. 18): "Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery." Then we have that striking declaration of St. Paul (Eph. v. 28, 32): "So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. . . . This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church." Again St. Paul urges (Eph. v. 25), "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered Himself up for it." The Divine Master then placed marriage and the family upon the plane of the supernatural. The Christian marriage is supernatural inasmuch as it originates in a sacrament and has for its object the salvation of parents and children. The love of husband and wife is sanctified by God's grace; all of their relations are spiritualized; they cooperate with God by rearing children who are destined to be the heirs of God in heaven.

That Christian marriage is the highest form of conjugal union and an institution necessary for the welfare of both the family and of society must be evident to anyone who compares dispassionately its moral and material effects with those flowing from the practice of divorce. A man like Westermarck, who certainly cannot be accused of bias in favor of Christianity, sees a necessary connection between the durability of marriage and civilization itself. And Dr. Chatterton-Hill, of the University of Geneva, has declared that:

"in its whole conception of family life, in the protection afforded to the wife by the doctrine of the indissolubility of the marriage tie, by its insistence on the mutual duties of husband and wife, and on the duties of both toward their children, and in its having made the family a great school of preparation for social life, Christianity has proved itself an invaluable factor of social integration and social stability which can be assured only by the integration and stability of the family."

UNITY AND INDISSOLUBILITY

Christian society depends upon the Christian family, and the Christian family depends upon the unity and indissolubility of marriage. Among Catholics it is hardly necessary to insist upon the unity and indissolubility of marriage. But it may be that we do not always fully appreciate the Christian ideal of the family. This traditional ideal has been admirably summed up in three words: authority, obedience, and cooperation. Our age seems to be intolerant of authority. The spirit of individualism, of the aggressive ego, is rampant. As a result, even the authority of parents over their children is not sufficiently exercised and respected. "The family of today," remarks a recent writer, "not infrequently presents a group of clashing wills, an association of highly individualistic persons, each asserting his rights and maintaining his privileges with greater or less success." The corollary of parental authority is filial obedience. Obedience is the greatest of the moral virtues. If our children do not learn this virtue in the home, where shall they acquire it? Let them learn of Him eighteen years of whose life are summarized by St. Luke in the statement: He was obedient to his parents. Finally there is the great duty of cooperation. The Roman law with its splendid grasp of truth, that was however not long maintained in point of fact, defined marriage: *Coniunctio maris et feminae, consortium omnis vitae, divini et humani iuris communicatio*—"The union of the male and female, the partnership of the whole life, the fellowship of rights divine and human." The Christian family, translating this noble theory into fact implies a real and definite equality of husband and wife. Their cooperation is based upon mutual love. This love, however, must be greater than mere love of the senses, which is essentially selfish; it must be more than that sentimental love which anthropologists call romantic. The continuance of the most fundamental of human relations, that of husband and wife, cannot be made to depend upon the continuance or cessation of an emotion. Society and the children of the marriage have rights less ephemeral than the mere existence of an emotional state of mind in the parents. The love of husband and wife must, in the final analysis, spring from an appreciation of qualities of mind and heart; it must be unselfish; it must be capable of sacri-

fic. Above all, it must be a love that will shrink in horror from anything that would reduce marriage and the family to an unnatural and unchristian level.

IDEALS

"The world," Mr. Gilbert Chesterton has somewhere remarked, "cannot keep its own ideals." If this be true of ideals in general, it is especially and lamentably true of the ideals of marriage and the family. The moment society relinquishes Christ's ideal of marriage absolutely indissoluble, it sinks to the materialistic conception of divorce so easy that marriage may be terminated at the will of the parties. As a natural and necessary consequence, the family becomes an unstable sort of thing, and family life practically non-existent. Archbishop Glennon of St. Louis recently remarked: "There are in these days not many truly Christian homes." As our part in combating this dangerous tendency, we have tried to outline briefly the justification of the Church's teaching regarding marriage and the family, both from reason and from revelation. But in the final analysis, the justification of these institutions rests not with those who state the principles but with those who live them. Our fight against the modern sophists and the adherents of the new paganism will be won not so much in the pulpit as in the home. Our people must strive, with the grace of God, to imitate the Holy Family of Nazareth. By so doing we shall perform a service of inestimable value to society, we shall prepare for our children a priceless heritage, we shall win for ourselves the crown of immortality. For in the words of Tobias, (ii. 18), "we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those who never change their faith from Him."

Why Condemn Divorce?

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“WHY condemn divorce?” is a question very earnestly asked by many well-meaning people. They are aware that divorce has come to be accepted as a social institution by a large section of the world; governments provide for it by legislation; some religious bodies accept it, or at least make no consistent protest against it. Divorce, we are told, has been in the world since the world's youth. Moses, earthly vicar under the ancient theocracy, approved of it for the Jewish people; our Divine Savior Himself seems to have admitted it as lawful in at least one case. Divorce, according to its upholders, is a great benefactor of humanity, because it gives relief to many a tortured soul who otherwise would be condemned to life-long misery; the trusting girl who in the morning of her innocence was wedded to a human beast, is enabled to escape and find refuge with a more tender, purer spouse; the poor deluded husband, whose home, like a castle of cards, topples about him, is enabled by this beneficent law to sunder the bond that has become a shackle, and, profiting by experience, to begin his life anew under more favorable auspices. Why, then, condemn divorce? Instead of being condemned, should not divorce be hailed as a deliverer, a haloed angel coming with golden key to deliver the innocent from the prison-house of misplaced confidence and besmirched affection?

Nay, more! Divorce has been grievously misrepresented and maligned. It is not really an enemy of the marriage bond; rather is it a friend of that bond and a promoter of conjugal chastity, for it saves the bond from stain by taking it away. When married persons weary of one another, and the young dream of love has been re-

placed by the nightmare of disillusionment, is it not better that the erstwhile lovers should part? Is it not better to seek heartsease in new espousals than sin against a vow that no longer unites their hearts?

Why, then, condemn divorce? Why does one Christian body—namely, the Catholic Church—take a definite, unchanging stand on the question of marriage and divorce, refusing to admit the sundering of the marriage bond for any cause save death? In a word, why does the Catholic Church absolutely condemn divorce?

CATHOLIC POSITION

For this is the Catholic position: once a marriage is valid and complete in the Catholic sense, there can be no going back, no rescinding of the contract. It lasts as long as life. It is true that one occasionally hears of matrimonial cases tried before ecclesiastical tribunals, and that sometimes the verdict is: "No marriage; the parties are free to contract new alliances." But such a verdict is not a divorce: it is simply a declaration of nullity. In other words, it is an official declaration that what had seemed to be a marriage never was a marriage; there was some hidden defect or impediment, which invalidated the union from the beginning; perhaps the persons concerned were very closely related, or one of them was forced into the marriage, and gave no real consent. In such or similar cases, the ecclesiastical court simply declares that the bond of marriage never existed, that in the circumstances the contracting parties were not capable of being married to one another. On the other hand, divorce in the true sense is the sundering of an existing bond, the breaking of a real, valid marriage.

It is also a fact that in certain extreme cases the Church may grant a separation, so that the husband and wife are no longer bound in conscience to a life in common, to give to one another the solace of mutual companionship; but this, too, is very different from divorce. In an ecclesiastical separation the marriage bond remains; neither husband nor wife is allowed to remarry as long as the partner remains alive.

This one point is certain: the Holy See, no matter how earnestly besought or powerfully threatened, has never granted, and never will grant, a complete divorce of a true and perfect marriage.

DIVORCE A MENACE TO SOCIETY

The answer to the question, "Why condemn divorce?" is to be found in the categorical denial of the statements made by those who favor divorce. Contrariwise to their assertions, divorce has not been always in the world; Moses did not approve of it; Our Divine Lord, so far from permitting it in certain circumstances, completely and absolutely forbade it. To hold that divorce is a beneficent institution is to hold a theory specious indeed, and one that has often been confuted by sad experience; divorce is opposed to the very nature of man; instead of lessening infidelity, it leads to utter contempt for matrimonial obligations, to the increase of immorality, to the destruction of the family, and to the ruin of the State. Thus, divorce stands condemned as one of the world's greatest factors of evil.

If a few words be said on each of the foregoing points, a sufficient answer will have been given to the question, "Why condemn divorce?"

PROOF FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

For the assertion that divorce did not exist from the beginning of history, but was an innovation brought about by the vagaries of human passion, we have the authority of Our Lord Himself. Speaking of divorce, He said: "From the beginning it was not so" (Matt. xix.). In the beginning of the world there was no such thing as divorce. "Have ye not read," He said, "that He who made man from the beginning, made them male and female?" He referred the questioning Pharisees to the ancient Scriptures, in which (Gen. ii. 24) it is written of marriage: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh." Our Lord quoted that text triumphantly, and added to it His own comment: "Now they are not two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." What clearer teaching could we wish for about the sacredness of the marriage bond and the impiety of divorce? "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." It is the Son of God who speaks, and His Divine voice thunders an absolute prohibition: "Let no

man put asunder"—let no man dare to break this holy bond of matrimony, for this bond has been ratified by the Eternal Father of all mankind: "Let no man put asunder." And yet, men say: "Why condemn divorce?" "But," said the Pharisees to the Messiah, "did not Moses command divorce?" According to him, it was lawful to put away one's wife, to give her a certain formal document testifying that she was divorced, and lo! both she and her husband were released from their marriage vow, and were at liberty to contract a new marriage. How do You explain it? Surely You are not going to contradict Moses, the Solon of Israel, the Divinely-inspired lawgiver, who was the voice of God to our fathers from the burning bush to the gates of the Promised Land!

Our Lord answered pointedly that Moses had not commanded to give a bill of divorce, but that Moses permitted divorce on account of the hardness of their hearts. Moses tolerated divorce because he could not prevent it. The Jews were a stiff-necked people, callous, materialistic in their tendencies, and obstinate in their opinions. Amongst them, woman did not occupy the high and respected position to which Christian chivalry has raised her; she had scarcely any rights; she was little more than a drudge; a piece of property, the foil of passion, the mother of sons; her self-sacrifice was unacknowledged, her faults severely punished. "By reason of the hardness of your hearts," said Our Lord, "Moses permitted you to do such things," as though He would say: "If you were not so wicked Moses would not have permitted you to put away your wives. In order to avoid other evils, such as physical violence, or perhaps even the crime of murder itself, he regularized the divorces that he could not prevent."

Our Divine Lord withdrew unreservedly the permission granted by Moses. In Matthew xix. 6, and in Mark x. 9, He says: "What . . . God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." In Luke xvi. 18, and in Mark x. 11, He says without mincing of words that whosoever puts away his wife and marries another, is guilty of adultery, and that the wife who puts away her husband and remarries is guilty of the same sin.

Our Lord made no exception whatsoever: His words are unequivocal. He says plainly: That which Moses granted to you on account of your wickedness, I withdraw. Divorce must cease. I will not tolerate it in the New

Law. Henceforth, you are joined together in wedlock as irrevocably as your first parents were wedded in creation's dawn. Come, then, you spouses, face life's highway hand in hand; fear not the bitterness of sorrow nor the heroism of duty. If you must suffer, I am your Consoler and your Physician; if you are weak, am not I the God of the strong?

DIFFICULTY FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

In St. Matthew's Gospel, chapters v. and xix. there are some words from which at first sight it would appear that Our Lord made an exception in the case of unchastity. Of the two passages the second one presents the greater difficulty. The text of it is as follows: "And I say to you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery, and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery" (Matt. xix. 9). These words have been the occasion of much discussion, and by many non-Catholic Christians are taken as an indication that Christ regarded marital infidelity as a ground for complete divorce. Catholic commentators explain that Christ was speaking only of separation, and that the words, "except it be for fornication," mean that the innocent party is not responsible for any further sins that may be committed by the guilty one during the separation.

That such is the true meaning is gathered from a careful consideration of the entire passage. Our Lord, in answering a question put by the Pharisees, has just reminded them that marriage in its pristine purity was the life-long union of one man and one woman. If He admitted adultery as a cause of complete divorce, then His religion must be inferior in that respect to the revelation made by God "in the beginning." Such an interpretation is inconsistent with the very concept of Christianity, which is more perfect, more sublime, than any previous covenant, because it is the culmination of Revelation, the apex of God's beneficent education of humanity.

Furthermore, that the disciples understood Our Lord's words in the Catholic sense is obvious from the next words recorded in the Gospel: "His disciples say unto Him: If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry" (v. 10). They were surprised, and

in a sense shocked by the severity of Our Lord's teaching regarding divorce. The impression left on their minds was that as He had done away with every loophole of escape, and marriage was to be henceforth utterly irrevocable, it were better to remain single. Hence their words: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry."

Our Divine Lord allowed them to remain under that impression. He did not say: "You have misunderstood Me; My teaching is not so strict as you imagine." He simply said to them: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. . . . He that can take it, let him take it." In other words, He said to them: This is My command, take it or leave it.

In any case, the texts already quoted from the other Evangelists—namely, St. Mark and St. Luke—leave no shadow as to the mind of Our Lord on the matter. Moreover, St. Paul was surely well acquainted with Christ's teaching, and in his exposition of that teaching he makes no mention of any exception whatsoever. He says: "The Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband, and if she depart, that she remain unmarried . . . And let not the husband put away his wife" (I. Cor. vii. 10). And the same inspired mouthpiece of Christ writes elsewhere: "For the woman that hath a husband is bound to the law . . . Therefore, whilst her husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress if she be with another man" (Romans vii. 1-3).

All Christian tradition is on the side of the Catholic Church, a fact which was acknowledged by Mr. Gladstone in the year 1851, when he boldly asserted that for the first three centuries there is not a single trace of divorce with re-marriage for any cause whatever. Hermas and St. Justin Martyr in the second century; Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria in the third century; St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome in the fourth; and St. Augustine in the fifth century; all bear witness to the interpretation placed by the Catholic Church on the words of Our Lord.

Apart, then, from her claim to infallibility, the Catholic Church has indubitable scriptural ground for forbidding divorce. For no cause whatsoever may husband and wife be completely divorced. God alone may separate them, by death. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

FAMILY THE BASIS OF SOCIETY

By completely excluding divorce, Our Lord ennobled and purified the family, which is the basis of society. The husband remains the head of the family, not as ruling with tyrannical power, but rather as a self-denying provider and protector; woman is raised to the status of man's revered companion, help, and solace, a gentle power that sways by affection, a moral ruler in a domestic republic.

This Divine teaching has always been upheld by the Catholic Church. The Vicar of Christ has never abated one jot or tittle of the solemn command. "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." In no single instance has the Church modified her doctrine, for a Divine decree cannot be modified. The same law holds good for princes as for people: the perfect Christian marriage will not be set aside for any cause on earth.

HISTORIC REFUSALS

History is full of instances in which the Popes faced disasters of every kind rather than degrade the holy state of marriage. Pope St. Nicholas I., though besieged in his city of Rome, compelled King Lothaire II. to take back the lawful wife, whom he had set aside by means of a pretended divorce. Innocent III. compelled Philip Augustus to remain true to his queen. Paul III. suffered the spiritual defection of the realm of England rather than consent to the desires of King Henry VIII. If the Pope had consented to divorce Henry from the innocent Catherine, Henry would have continued to be an upholder of the Faith, all England would have remained true to the Church, and the countries that have been colonized by England, America, South Africa, and Australia, would be Catholic nations today. But the Pope could not grant a divorce. There can be no exception to a Divine law, and so, rather than be false to his trust, he suffered the great Anglo-Saxon nation to be torn from the bosom of the Church. In 1806, Pius VII. braved the anger of the great Napoleon by refusing to grant a divorce to Joseph Bonaparte; and four years later the same Pope, then a prisoner at Savona, raised his voice in protest against the Emperor's own divorce from the Empress Josephine.

It is true, then, that the doctrine of the Church is unchanging, and it cannot be otherwise than unchanging, for the simple reason that it is not hers alone, but it is the solemn command of the Most High: "What, therefore, God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

MARRIAGE A SACRAMENT

Even if the Divine Will had never been expressly revealed to us, if Our Lord had not withdrawn the permission granted by Moses, if there were no such thing as religion or religious instinct in the human soul, divorce would stand condemned, because our own reason tells us that in divorce there is an element injurious to the interests of the human race. Divorce is a contradiction of the very idea of marriage, and is an injustice to posterity.

The marriage contract differs from every other contract by the fact that it concerns human beings, persons, as such. In other agreements we deal with property of one kind or another; lands, houses, material, work of mind or body. In marriage, the interests at stake are far deeper and more sacred; the marriage contract concerns all that the word "person" implies—intelligence, feelings, faculties; and marriage is the complete union of two persons in soul and mind and heart; of two persons pledged to look on life through the same eyes, to travel life's road hand in hand, 'mid pain and pleasure, 'neath sun and shower, to the hill of the world's end. Marriage is a mutual surrender of two wills; two human beings are made one in love and in truth, in virtue and in honor, living life in common by the same hearth, cherishing like ideals, animated and drawn together by an affection that goes deeper than natural attraction or attractiveness; and, for Christians, marriage is the living sign or symbol of the undying union between Christ and His Church, of the eternal marriage that brings together all things in heaven and on earth, in humanity and in God.

There can be no such complete union as long as divorce is admitted even as a possibility; in order that two minds may be made one, they must be brought together, not merely for a few years, but for all life; two hearts cannot love one another fully and supremely as long as the possibility of transferred affection is contemplated. If affection is to be real, it must be irrevocable; if the union

is to be complete, permanence is essential. To reserve the right of separation and of remarriage is to exclude something that belongs to the very nature of the marriage bond.

The existence of the divorce court is a temptation to seek divorce, or to provide some of the causes on account of which the civil law allows divorce. Facility of separation destroys mutual confidence, inflames every trifling dispute and brings many a family to misery and disaster. How often does it happen with a husband and wife that all goes well for a while, for a few years, until life falls into routine, until defects of character become apparent, and attractions fade. In such a day of weariness, if temptations come or jealousy is aroused, the conjugal bond is gravely endangered. The divorce court is open, the way is clear. In a short space of time, and with comparatively little trouble, the bond is severed, the husband and wife are free to go their ways, what God has joined together man has put asunder. If there were no divorce court, many domestic disagreements would never occur, or would readily be adjusted. The knowledge that their marriage could never be broken would do much to guard the spouses against moral catastrophe; they would seek to conserve and intensify their mutual affection, deliberate thoughts of infidelity would be abhorrent to their minds, slight differences would be borne cheerfully, and even grave defects would be endured patiently for very reverence of the marriage bond.

FREEDOM NOT LICENSE

The good people who sincerely believe in divorce advance various arguments for their opinions. They tell us that no contract is absolutely indissoluble, that no man has a right to mortgage the future, that one's whole life should not be overshadowed by some solitary mistake of inexperienced youth. Our answer, as already explained, is based on the Divine Law, and on the very idea of marriage. Furthermore, to bind one's self irrevocably does not imply servitude; how often do men vow their whole lives to a country or to a cause? Our liberty is not absolute; personal happiness is not the measure of freedom. Let no man plead that he ought to be released from the elementary law because he rushed into marriage unthinkingly, and pronounced his marriage vows without realiz-

ing their meaning. Man is a being endowed with reason and capable of forethought; it is for him to reflect, not once, but many times, before he undertakes obligations that will affect him all through life and in every fibre of life.

Well, then, does the Catholic Church make no allowance for poor human nature? Has she no sympathy with the innocent victims of unhappy marriages? Is it just that the husband whose wife has forgotten her Christian dignity should be condemned to a life of celibacy? Is it just that the wife whose husband has cruelly betrayed her trust should be forced to go through life alone, defrauded of wifehood, the object of pointing fingers, branded with the stigma, "deserted"? Why should such victims be condemned to forfeit their personal happiness? Does not all humanity cry out against so cruel an injustice?

It has to be admitted that sometimes the innocent suffer, that many a life has been blighted, not, indeed, by the law of God nor of the Church, nor of nature, but by the sins of the guilty. The evils and miseries that come to some individuals because they cannot remarry have to be weighed against the far greater and more numerous evils that come to society at large because of divorce. And does not the well-being of society rest upon the willing sacrifice of the individual? Duty is a law of life. Almost daily, men and women die for truth and for justice. No peril daunts the mother whose babe is in danger. The soldier gladly goes to death. Is not all life a struggle? Are we not all faced with stern duty at every turning; duty to the task whereby we gain our bread, duty to those amongst whom we live, duty to the land that bore us, duty to the laws that govern us?

When Our Lord condemned divorce and proclaimed that marriage could never be broken, He issued an appeal to virtue and heroism. He called on us to rise above the sordid things of life, to remember that we are not as the unreasoning beasts of the field, but that we are the noblest beings in this mundane universe; only "a little less than the angels" He made us. That He appeals to men and women to deny themselves in certain circumstances, to restrain the impulses of lower nature, to make a sacrifice of mere animal instincts, is not a restriction of human liberty, for liberty is not the power to do as we wish; it is only the power to do right. If men are able to fast, to

deny themselves in order to train their bodies for some prize on earth, surely they can deny themselves for the sake of the law of God, for the sake of the greater good of humanity, for the sake of respect for and fidelity to that most intimate, tender, and sacred of human relationships—the marriage bond? And God does not leave us alone in the struggle; He Himself is ever nigh; on Him we lean, by Him our weakness is made Divine strength. We cannot conquer unless we kneel and pray; then, in God's name, let us kneel and pray.

WELFARE OF MANKIND ENDANGERED

We have said that in this struggle the very dignity and the general welfare of mankind are at stake. Where divorce is prevalent humanity loses its dignity, marriage becomes a transient association of mere animals, children are practically parentless, and are not far from the stage in which they become chattels of the State, as they were in ancient Sparta, and as modern Russia promises to make them. In all society the child has the first claim, and his claim is strongest on those who have given him life. He comes into life weak, defenceless, dependent on parents for protection, nourishment, education. Even in the brute creation the offspring is cared for and protected by the parents. In the human species the period of helplessness is prolonged, and the need of parental affection and care is at least correspondingly great. The child sees father and mother not exactly as two distinct beings, but as one, *i. e.*, as his parents, as a group that belongs to him and to whom he belongs. He is equally drawn to both. The thought of their divorce, of their being married to others, is to him entirely repulsive. It is as if something fundamental were taken out of his life, because it separates the two he loves most dearly; it desecrates the affection to which he owes his existence; it renders meaningless the one word that should mean everything to child and parents—the little word "home."

What must be the moral effect of divorce on children? They are faced with the bewildering and unnatural fact that their parents no longer love one another, that at least one parent has sinned, and sinned gravely. They grow up with a precocious knowledge of the sordidness of life. Their own affection is divided, or perhaps their

minds are poisoned against one parent. Sometimes they are handed over to be cared for by strangers, or they are asked to address a newcomer by the dear name of father, whilst their own father receives the same sacred title from some who are not his children. Thus, when divorce takes place, the tender ties that bind families are broken beyond repair; the very words "affection" and "unselfishness" can never be fully understood by the children. And if the children do not understand "affection" and "unselfishness," how can they ever grasp the meaning of "Christian marriage" and of "holy purity"?

DIVORCE SPELLS RUIN

Someone may say: "Suppose there are no children. In such a case can there be any objection to divorce?" We have seen already that divorce is wrong in itself, whether there are children or not; but, in addition, it is obvious that the prospect of divorce may very easily be one of the reasons why there are no children. Where divorce flourishes, motherhood languishes. Where the divorce court is crowded, the cradles are empty, and when the cradles are empty, the nation is doomed.

Ancient Rome dominated the world as long as marriage was honored and the family cherished, but in the later period of the empire divorce became so prevalent that marriage practically ceased to have any meaning. Seneca tells us that in his time the most distinguished ladies counted their years by the number of husbands they had had; St. Jerome mentions the case of a Roman matron married for the twenty-third time; and in the wake of divorce followed its kindred evil—the limitation of the family, the suicide of the race. Three centuries of divorce sufficed to achieve the complete decadence of proud, imperial, world-ruling Rome. A day came when Roman emperors had to rely on foreign mercenaries for the defence of the sacred walls; Rome had no Romans left to fight her battles.

So with the nations of today: as divorce increases the birth-rate diminishes. If the State is to survive, divorce must cease. Of late years the French Government has begun to realize that freedom of divorce will ultimately mean the enslavement of France. France has reason to fear the future, on account of her extremely low birth-

rate, largely consequent upon divorce. In the United States of America, the evil has assumed most alarming proportions. Divorce is increasing three times as fast as the population. In one district the proportion of divorces to marriages is one in eight, and in another it is alleged to be as high as one in four. Even non-Catholic religious bodies have grown alarmed, and one of their spokesmen, Rev. Morgan Dix, Bishop of Maine, is quoted as saying that in New England "the Christian conception of the nature and obligations of the marriage bond finds scarcely any recognition in legislation or in the prevailing sentiment of the community." All over the land, from San Francisco to New York, and from New Orleans to the north, that sinister sign of degeneracy is seen—the empty cradle. The average number of children in the native family is two, whereas the foreign-born citizen usually has six. Of recent years the authorities of that country have placed serious restrictions on immigration; the Goddess of Liberty lights a gateway that is almost closed to the prolific foreigner. Would not the safety of the country be better assured if her people realized that divorce and re-marriage is only another name for successive Mormonism, and went back to the Gospel idea of union between one man and one woman until death?

England, too, has reason to deplore having instituted divorce legislation; recently, in one month, there were thirteen hundred undefended divorces there. Here in Australia the number of divorces has almost doubled in five years. We seek by various inducements to encourage desirable immigrants of the white races, whilst, at the same time, the divorce mills continue to grind out their disruption of families and discouragement of progeny. It is only necessary to compare the increase of divorces with what the "Commonwealth Year Book" calls the "steadily declining birthrate" in order to be convinced that an efficacious aid to keep Australia white would be to lay stress on the Christian character of marriage and to do away with divorce.

BACK TO CHRISTIAN IDEALS

The whole theory of divorce is based on the fundamental error of overlooking the innate holiness of marriage, and regarding it as a merely civil contract, and a

relatively unimportant one at that. In fact, it is often entered into with less forethought than is given to ordinary business agreements. It is true that marriage has certain aspects that concern the State, for man is a complex being; he lives amongst his fellows, he has some possessions, his activities react on others, his marriage engenders social complications which for convenience sake we will call civil effects, and the State, with the consent of the citizens, takes these new interests under her protection.

But marriage itself is a religious institution, because the Almighty has always shown the closest interest in it, because He raised it to sacramental dignity, because it is associated with the plan of Redemption, inasmuch as on it depends the existence, happiness and sanctification of the countless generations for whom the Redeemer died.

This religious character of matrimony must be recognized; human love must be strengthened and purified by an infusion of the supernatural. Husband and wife must be convinced that their union is a lifelong partnership in cooperation with the Almighty in the propagation of the human race, and that it brings with it eternal responsibilities for one another and for the family that may spring from them.

If marriage be thus venerated it will not be entered into lightly, nor for self-interest, nor for mere passion's sake, but only under the influence of honest and God-fearing human affection. Affection and passion are often assumed to be identical, whereas in truth they are very different. Passion is an animal impulse; affection, the power of loving, belongs to our higher nature.

The marriage that is founded on passion only is apt to prove unhappy, because passion is a force that quickly spends itself. Youth passes, beauty fades, charms are staled by custom, and passion dies because it has nought whereon to live. But true conjugal affection is a noble emotion that the Creator Himself has planted in the bosom of man. It is pure, holy, self-denying, self-controlling. It sympathizes with frailty, it pities even malice. It is not withered by the heat of life's dreary day, but remains fresh unto the sunset, for it is a reflection and a symbol of the undying love than exists between our crucified Savior and His Spouse, the Church. Like unto its prototype, it must be compassionate; it must be self-sacrificing; it must be persevering, despite adversity, weak-

ness and sin. Not until the world returns to this Christian ideal of marriage, with its implication of unselfishness and its check on passion, will the world be able to eradicate that cancer of modern civilization—divorce.